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“Armed with an Encyclopedia and an Axe”: The Socialist and Post-Socialist Street Toponymy of East Berlin Revisited Through Gramsci

Jani Vuolteenaho & Guy Puzey

Introduction

Writing about Berlin, Maoz Azaryahu once outlined a paradigmatic approach in contemporary research on the politics of honorific street naming:

The selection of street names is a political procedure determined by ideological needs and political power relations. Even if it may be presented as a response to popular sentiments, it is always implemented by nominated agents of the ruling political order and the naming procedure is a manifest feature of authority In democratic regimes, local government is legally in charge of naming streets, even though the state may have some rights as to the names of streets in specific areas of the national capital that are rendered nationally representative. Such differences matter less in authoritarian regimes, where local and central authorities are only formally differentiated. (1997, 481)

Whilst not denying the serviceability of the above generalizations in many research settings, in this chapter we will argue that focusing on the overtly political procedures and meanings of street naming is not the only avenue to the advancement of critical toponymic scholarship. One valuable contribution of “politicized” street naming research in recent decades has certainly been the accumulation of detailed mappings of local-scale and intra-state governmental and party-political processes and contingencies, especially in periods following radical or revolutionary political changes. In particular, research into socialist and post-socialist urban contexts across Eastern and Central Eastern Europe has revealed much about top-down processes and the political wrangling linked with toponymic de- and re-commemorations, and also about the honorific-pedagogic functions that street (re)naming serves for the legitimization of political systems and rendering as “natural” state-sanctioned ideological values and interpretations of the past (e.g., Azaryahu 1986, 1996, 1997, 2009; Light 2004; Gill 2005; Marin 2012; Palonen 2015). As a flipside, however, this research has tended to sideline less obviously political aspects of street naming. It is symptomatic, for instance, that many critical readings of street toponymy have revolved around explicitly honorific inscriptions of historical events and heroic individuals typical of high-prestige urban locations. As Rose-Redwood (2008), Vuolteenaho and Ainiala (2009), and Berg (2011) have all noted, critical toponymists have often turned a blind eye to other types of thematic, possessive, or otherwise deceptively “banal” street and place names that proliferate in the urban landscape.

We also argue that, more generally, a restricted analytical understanding of “the political” as a more or less autonomous sphere of power-holding elites has regularly taken place at the expense of more elusive roles of “the cultural” and “the popular” in street naming practices (cf. Verdery 1991; De Soto 1996). Crucially, for our present purposes, criticism of this latter bias resonates with the conceptions of power developed by Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), according to which, power is not merely a one-directional, top-down process. In his elaboration of the notion of hegemony, Gramsci advocated an understanding of the cultural roots of power and the co-existing processes of coercion and consent that shape relationships between rulers and the ruled in any given society. Equally intriguingly, although less widely known, Gramsci’s approach to political theory was closely tied to his strong

interest in language practices. As a young journalist in the late 1910s, as we will outline in the following section, Gramsci even specifically criticized the “evisceration of the old Turin” in honorific-odonymic terms, advocating instead a street naming policy consistent with “solidarity through memory.”

This chapter’s approach is to explore Gramsci’s specific writings about street naming and more general ideas on hegemony to guide and inspire the study of power and street naming. As a result, it is hoped to shed light on more covertly political dynamics in street naming practices. This Gramscian approach will be applied, in this instance, to the research setting of East Berlin, both during the period of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and after its demise in the context of a unified Germany. After investigating relevant insights from Gramsci, we will tackle the multiple, and often paradoxical, manifestations of Marxist-Leninist state socialism as an allegedly “people-empowering” ideology in the street toponymy of East Berlin in 1945–1989. Analyzing both honorific and thematic street names, we trace how the (1) self-aggrandizement of the party-led political system (through so-called cult naming), (2) ideals of socialist internationalism, and (3) socio-cultural indigenization of a distinctively German socialism were manifested across East Berlin’s inner-city and suburban districts. Next, we will apply a Gramscian lens to street name revisions as well as instances of resilience of the GDR’s toponymic legacy in post-socialist urban development. In line with Gramsci’s postulations, our methodological emphasis in both periods analyzed is simultaneously on blatantly top-down (coerced) and legitimacy-seeking (or otherwise reciprocal) relationships between name-giving elites and ordinary Berliners. Whilst acknowledging the historical, administrative, and socio-cultural particularities of Berlin as a stage of socialist and post-socialist toponymic transformations, we conclude by discussing the wider implications of Gramsci’s work for the understanding of power in critical street naming studies.

Extrapolating Odonymic Lessons from Gramsci

Gramsci’s international reputation is predominantly based on his *Quaderni del Carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*), which he wrote while imprisoned by Mussolini’s Fascist regime in 1926–1935. This work covers a range of historical, cultural, and political topics, including elaborations of classical treatments of political manoeuvring and pre-existing hegemony theories, observations on civic revolts and legitimacy crises raging in many European states at that time, and commentaries on contemporary popular culture. Gramsci’s influence as a theorist of power has been wide-ranging and enduring across political and cultural research, not least among subsequent hegemony theorists (e.g., Williams 1980, 1983; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 2005; Johnson 2007; Thomas 2009; Coutinho 2012). His thoughts on matters such as the relationship between the state and civil society, different types of hegemony, the role of “organic intellectuals” as cultural mediators of hegemonic power, and the oppositional pairing of hegemony and subalternity have been applied to the study of many different societies and political systems.

A Brief Outline of Gramsci’s Discussion of Hegemony

One of Gramsci’s innovations was that he conceived dominant influences as not solely “limited to matters of direct political control” but also encompassing “a more general way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships” (Williams 1983, 145). In certain societal situations, the power of a hegemon can be so strong that aspects of the prevailing political-cultural system—including its founding ideologies and historical narratives—are widely internalized as “common sense.” This notion resonates with critical toponymists’

current insistence on the power of place naming to make political ideologies appear as the “natural order of things” in the eyes of ordinary citizens (e.g., Azaryahu 2009, 62). However, Gramsci also argued that any organized society is composed of both political society (the state, the official) and civil society (the popular, the cultural sphere). Furthermore, he made it plain that an effective hegemony can only be won and sustained through existing ideologies, traditions, and particularly what he termed a “national-popular collective will” (Gramsci 2007, 1559; translation in Gramsci 1971, 130). While the institutionalized practices of power by a hegemony-seeking regime are of necessity coerced, they simultaneously hinge on the cultural sphere and its everyday producers (intellectuals, teachers, journalists, artists, civic organizations, etc.) who may have an “organic” connection to the lay people and communities. The influence of cultural hegemony thus derives not only from coercion or force, but also from popular consent.

Significantly, Gramsci saw language-related practices as the fundamentals of an “educational relationship” between the rulers and the ruled. “Every relationship of ‘hegemony,’” he argued, “is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations” (Gramsci 2007, 1331; translation in Gramsci 1971, 350). In a fundamentally two-way relationship, the rulers mobilize intellectual labor to propagate their ideological worldview as unquestioned common sense. In this process, language practices—from language education proper to linguistic standardization and “lessons” about significant historical events disseminated through schoolbooks and other popular media—all play quintessential roles. In this way, Gramsci showed insight into occasions when the official and the popular were in a reciprocal dialogue. In Joseph Femia’s (1981) formulation, Gramsci’s utopian-Marxist conception of “integral hegemony” embraced political systems that are democratic and organically representative of society. Furthermore, Gramsci acknowledged that in seeking to guarantee popular consent, regimes of power often resort to a degree of self-criticism as “the cultural environment ... reacts back” (2007, 1331; translation in Gramsci 1971, 350). This bi-directionality, of course, is not always the case: a dominant ideology can also be merely coercive, monologic, and hence deemed a “minimal” hegemony (only catering for elites) or a “decadent” hegemony (a corroded integral hegemony no longer able to satisfy the masses) (Femia 1981).

The fact that Gramsci’s political thought was heavily influenced by his interest in linguistics and his personal experience of power relations between languages has often escaped the attention of political and social scientists, although there are researchers who underscore the utility of this aspect of Gramsci’s thinking (e.g., Lo Piparo 1979; Ives 2004; Thomas 2009; Puzey 2011, 2016; Carlucci 2013). A particularly intriguing discussion of coerced power in language practices was penned by Gramsci himself, as a young dissident intellectual and journalist, when he engaged in scathing criticism over ongoing street name changes in Turin. We will now turn to this early polemic.

Gramsci as a Critical Toponymist

On June 1, 1917, a newly announced list of projected renamings in Turin’s city center by the municipal street naming committee was discussed in *Avanti!*, a left-wing newspaper co-edited by Gramsci. These proposals were the latest step in the ongoing gentrification or embourgeoisement of Turin’s inherited street toponymy, a process that had begun after Italian Unification, with an initial focus on the memorialization of the House of Savoy and of Risorgimento heroes and symbols. The former *via Dora Grossa* (named after a river) had become *via Giuseppe Garibaldi*, while *via Gasometro* (“Gasometer Street”) had been

renamed *via Giovanni Camerana* (after a poet), among several other street name changes privileging nationally exalted heroes over the inherited toponymy. The newest proposals continued in this spirit of “progressive” eradication, aiming to change *via dell’Ospedale* (“Hospital Street”) to *via Galileo Ferraris* (after an engineer and physicist, 1847–1897) and *via del Deposito* (“Warehouse Street”) to *via Quinto Agricola* (after a Roman general), for instance.

In the very same issue of *Avanti!*, Gramsci’s critical commentary was published. As a brief toponymic case study of Gramsci’s own, this short article bore the sardonic title, “Il progresso nello stradario” (Progress on the Street Map). Gramsci complained about the decorative function of the proposed names, void of any organic meaning connected to the places in question. With more than a hint of nostalgia for the local working-class heritage, Gramsci wrote:

Armed with an encyclopedia and an axe, [the street naming committee] is proceeding with the evisceration of the old Turin. Down come the old names, the traditional names of popular Turin that record the fervent life of the old medieval commune, the exuberant and original imagination of the Renaissance artisans, less encyclopedic but more practical and with better taste than the merchants of today. They are replaced with medal names. The street map is becoming a medal showcase Every name [in the artisans’ city] was a branch of life, it was the memory of a moment of collective life. The street map was like a common patrimony of memories, of affection, binding individuals together more strongly with the ties of solidarity through memory. The shop-keeping bourgeoisie has destroyed this heritage All the princes, regents, ministers and generals of the House of Savoy have been given their niche The encyclopedia has provided the rest. The bourgeois city is cosmopolitan, in other words a false international, a false universality It is the triumph of the colourless and tasteless cosmopolis. (Gramsci 1982 [1917], 183–4; translation by Guy Puzey)

It is perhaps not surprising that a Marxist philosopher would criticize bourgeois naming practices, but Gramsci was also criticizing the “evisceration of the old Turin.” This is entirely in keeping with his approach to organicity: the notion that there should be an organic link of ideas between political and intellectual power structures and the social groups they seek to represent. Here, Gramsci was calling for more sensitive, considered, and authentic naming, with a sense for the actual social history of a place and not only the history represented by elites and their heroes drawn from encyclopedias. In the terminology of the *Prison Notebooks*, the Turin street naming case was illustrative of a mismatch between political and civil societies, and of a coercive political culture from the viewpoint of local working people.

While Gramsci was not the only writer to recognize political tensions in the urban geography of street names prior to the recent critical turn in place name studies (Berg and Vuolteenaho 2009), his criticism of Turin’s neotoponymy intriguingly anticipated subsequent writings on hegemony and recent critical toponymic literature. Indeed, a dominant streak in the latter field has been a premise that place names—and especially street names, with their immediate dependency on political regimes and ideologies—mirror hierarchies of social power and temporal disruptions in regimes of governance. Much of this research has analyzed toponymic de- and re-commemorations in the aftermath of regime changes in socialist and post-socialist cities.

Still, the implications of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony go far beyond his time-specific journalistic criticism of Turin as a city where “the official” and “the elitist” did not communicate with the organic meanings of “the popular.” As already insinuated, from a Gramscian perspective, it is somewhat problematic that critical toponymists have often treated commemorative street naming as a merely one-way (top-down) symbolic practice. In this regard, critical scholarship on street naming has tended to halt its analytical and theoretical curiosity on the same level that young Gramsci concluded his commentary on Turin’s street name changes, namely on the conception of the urban namescape as an elitist

“medal showcase” with its functions of memorialization, commemoration, and aggrandizement. In other words, critical street name scholars have largely failed to address the complexities of toponymic power related to the reciprocal relationship between the rulers (elites) and the ruled (civil society). Consequently, socio-culturally attuned research questions on covert strategies to affect people’s worldviews, or the name-givers’ responsiveness to protests and popular sensibilities, have thus far mainly escaped their analytical and conceptual attention (for some partial exceptions and openings to dislodge this otherwise widespread trend, see Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010; Alderman and Inwood in this volume).

Writing in 1930, in one of the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci returned briefly to the subject of street naming. Even though this was a fleeting mention, in this connection he framed the role of street names as part of the “ideological structure of a ruling class,” due to their influence on public opinion. Hence Gramsci saw street naming as a component in the organization of ideological structures, and he went on to explain how important the study of these structures could be:

The press is the most dynamic part of the ideological structure, but not the only one. Everything that directly or indirectly influences or could influence public opinion belongs to it: libraries, schools, associations and clubs of various kinds, even architecture, the layout of streets and their names Such a study [of how the ideological structure of a ruling class is actually organized], conducted seriously, would be quite important: besides providing a living historical model of such a structure, it would inculcate the habit of assessing the forces of agency in society with greater caution and precision. What can an innovative class set against the formidable complex of trenches and fortifications of the ruling class? (Gramsci 2007, 333; translation in Gramsci 1996, 53)

Here Gramsci provides an engaging reminder of the potential significance of studies exploring the dynamics of such things as “the layout of streets and their names,” suggesting both a framework and a socio-political imperative for critical toponymic studies, while also demonstrating that recognition of the political implications of naming—and of street naming specifically—date back considerably longer than much recent work has acknowledged.

Returning to the more recent wave of critical place- and street-naming studies, a fortunate new trend is that the scholarship on toponymic memory politics is showing increasing signs of rapprochement with the Gramscian emphasis on the civic sides of political and societal life. For instance, geographers interested in socialist and post-socialist street name reforms have stressed the importance of research into how name changes are perceived by ordinary people (e.g., Azaryahu 2011a; Light and Young 2014; Crețan and Matthews 2016). Also, in theoretical terms, it has been increasingly acknowledged that “the power of political elites to reshape urban space and public memory is not absolute” (Light and Young 2014, 682), and it is “important not to reduce the symbolic struggle over street naming to a binary opposition between the ‘elite’ and the ‘marginalized’” (Rose-Redwood 2008, 447). Equally productive approaches have featured in studies that have sought explanations for “toponymic inertia” that apparently jars with a society’s ruling ideology (e.g., Gill 2005; Light and Young 2014), or reflected on the relationship between revolutionary and restorative naming strategies (Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2008; 2016). For this Gramscian-inspired study, aiming to take seriously both overt and covert political motivations in the street toponymy of East Berlin, these new research directions are promising points of departure.

Variations of Medal Naming and Toponymic Indigenization in Socialist East Berlin

The establishment of state-socialist political systems in East-Central Europe after the Second World War was essentially a relationship between hegemonic and subaltern polities: a

geopolitical situation in which one center (the Soviet Union with its Russian heartland) exerted its influence on different peripheries (the Sovietized territories and satellite states of Europe's Eastern Bloc). The early decades following the Bolshevik revolution saw the birth of distinctively socialist street naming discourses in the Soviet Union (e.g., Murray 2000; Marin 2012; Nikitenko 2012; Puzeý and Vuolteenaho 2016), which authorities across the "national democracies" of East-Central Europe and beyond recycled in decades to come. One of the archetypal street naming discourses was faithful to the classic "nationless" ideals of Marxism and working people's heroic role in world history, epitomized by "internationalist" commemorations of revolutionary thinkers and fallen dissidents, or ideals themselves, with street names such as *улица Розы Люксембург* "Rosa Luxemburg Street," and *мост Равенства* "Equality Bridge." After Lenin's death in 1924, another influential discourse was that of the Stalinist "cult model" (Murray 2000, 17), representing the apex of the self-aggrandizement of the one-party state and its living and late leaders (e.g., *Кировский проспект* "Kirov Avenue"). Thirdly, not all previous national heroes were expunged from the Soviet namescape. As writers such as Pushkin and Dostoevsky could be associated with anti-Tsarist attitudes or making a case for the "humiliated and insulted," they often remained untouchable. In the otherwise subaltern non-Russian territories annexed to the Soviet Union in the inter-war period, a policy of "local rooting" or "indigenization" (*коренизация*) was also adopted to instill "a socialist consciousness in the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union in so far as possible rooted in their own linguistic and cultural media" (Murray 2000, 75–6). In this section, we will trace variations of these three street naming discourses in the eulogizing of socialism and the first communist state on German soil in the street toponymy of East Berlin.

The Immediate Post-War Years

After the Second World War, Berlin was divided ideologically. The de-Nazification and democratization of social and political life was a vexed task, not least due to the relative autonomy of the city's twenty boroughs in local planning and naming matters (Azaryahu 1986, 2011b; Fuchshuber-Weiß 1994, 1473). Nonetheless, a fragile initial consensus existed among the city's new rulers on the urgency to rid the namescape of Nazi-era inscriptions, seen as incongruent with the founding ideals of the emergent democratic Germany. For instance, *Herman-Göring-Straße*, which had been named after the notorious Nazi Field Marshal, reverted to *Ebertstraße* in honor of the first President of the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert. The borough *Horst-Wessel-Stadt*, which had been dedicated to a Nazi martyr and propaganda symbol, took back its monarchical name *Friedrichschain* ("Friedrich's grove"). It was, however, disputed whether it was sufficient to obliterate the legacy of the Third Reich by reinstating such earlier names, or whether a more thorough reform should be enacted. Right-wing politicians generally insisted on a return to the Weimar situation (Azaryahu 2011b, 486). In lieu of this limited purge, advocates of the KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, Communist Party of Germany) and its successor, the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) suggested a much more radical anti-Fascist, anti-militarist, and anti-monarchist approach. In the view of many communists, the task ahead was to "accomplish a 'true' democratization of public space" through a new array of progressive street names (Azaryahu 1997, 483).

Even before the city's official partition in November 1948, the Moscow-backed SED sought to take sway over political life in the eight boroughs of the city's Soviet occupation zone. Interestingly, however, the number of honorific inscriptions related to the victorious Soviet forces remained moderate. One explanation for why these names would be a delicate issue among Berliners was related to recent and all-too-well-recalled wartime atrocities by

Soviet soldiers against civilians. In Berlin alone, approximately 100,000 women had been raped in the final days of the Third Reich (Beevor 2003, 410). Even so, the name *Platz der Befreiung* (“Liberation Square”) was given, as a reminder in the suburban landscape of the encirclement of the Nazi capital by Soviet forces, as well as *Bersarinstraße* in Mitte and *Bersarinplatz* in Friedrichshain. In the case of Soviet Colonel General Nikolai Berzarin (1904–1945), the first commander of occupied Berlin, responsiveness to local sentiments apparently mattered, as he “had become a surprisingly popular figure, credited with vigorous efforts to feed the starving Berliners” (Ladd 1997, 213; Beevor 2003, 409).

The commemorations of the former leaders of Germany’s workers’ movement and martyr communists appeared frequently in the Soviet sector. Among the exalted communists in key historical inner-city locations were Karl Liebknecht (1871–1919; *Horst-Wessel-Platz* reverted to *Liebknechtplatz* in 1945) and August Bebel (1840–1913; *Bebelplatz* replacing *Kaiser-Franz-Josef-Platz* in 1947). Of particular symbolic significance for the forthcoming, distinctively German “road to socialism” was the naming of *Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz*, swiftly replacing the aforementioned *Liebknechtplatz* in 1947. In contrast to Liebknecht, together with whom she was assassinated in Berlin in January 1919, Luxemburg was an “independent” Marxist theoretician who had criticized Lenin, Trotsky, and other early Soviet leaders for turning the revolutionary cause into a brutalization and bureaucratization of public life (Luxemburg 1961 [1918], 48). Alongside politicians, artists such as Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), a committed pacifist and sympathizer of the working class, were also memorialized in the namescape of East Berlin just before the city’s official division.

Archetypal Cult Names on the German Road to Socialism

After the city’s de jure split in 1948 and the founding of the GDR in 1949, “reactionary” ingredients in the namescape were increasingly extirpated and “progressive” symbols added, with “a kind of minor revolution, a ‘street-sign revolution’, carried out from above” (Azaryahu 1986, 591). As a 1949 prelude to a flagship socialist construction project, the Stalinist order was manifested by the bestowing of the name *Stalinallee* (until then *Frankfurter Allee* or *Große Frankfurter Straße*)—a new “medal name,” to use Gramsci’s terminology—for the city’s major artery (Colomb 2012, 62).¹ In 1950, another cross-district eastern avenue, *Landsberger Allee*, came to bear the name of Lenin, the brightest of bygone Soviet luminaries. Odonymic reminders of cultural and artistic bonds between the GDR and Soviet Union also proliferated around the turn of the 1950s (Azaryahu 1986, 590). A case in point was a newly renamed cluster of *Ossietzkystraße* (after the pacifist German writer and artist martyr hero Carl von Ossietzky, 1889–1938), *Tschaikowskistraße* (after the Soviet-esteemed classical Russian composer), and *Majakowskiring* (after the legendary Soviet revolutionary poet), located next to one another in an upper-class northern suburb. In its own way, the honoring of the legendary German-Soviet spy Richard Sorge in 1969 also celebrated a cultural brotherhood between the two states. In the early-1970s, *Allee der Kosmonauten* added an internationalist-futurist aspect to the street sign propaganda, by eulogizing the space travellers of the Soviet Union and its allies.

In a more genuinely Marxist spirit, discontinuity with the past was occasionally manifested through names redolent of the socialist ideals of universal peace. One iconic expression of this was *Brunnen der Völkerfreundschaft* (“Fountain of Friendship between Peoples”) in Alexanderplatz. Nonetheless, inscriptions honoring leading socialist politicians from particular countries became more common signifiers in the East German capital, reminding us that these naming practices still took place in the territorialized world of nation-states. This “solidarity cult” was made manifest via a “French” *Jacques-Dudas-Straße*, “Chilean” *Salvador-Allende-Straße*, “Vietnamese” *Ho-Chi-Minh-Straße*, “Indian” *Indira-*

Gandhi-Straße, and so forth (Sänger 2006, 175). *Dimitroffstraße*, its name drawn from the head of Comintern in 1934–1943 and Bulgarian Prime Minister of 1946–1949, also carried local connotations. While in exile in Berlin in 1933, Georgi Dimitrov had become a reputed anti-Fascist hero in the Reichstag fire trial for uncovering a Nazi conspiracy. As a variation of internationalist subdiscourse, references to revolutionaries from other eras and political-geographical contexts were also interspersed in the namescape of East Berlin. Names dedicated to Jean-Paul Marat, the late eighteenth-century publisher of *L'Ami du peuple* (“The Friend of the People”), and to Garibaldi, the nineteenth-century hero of the Risorgimento, exemplify this latter trend. Equally traversing boundaries of time and space through an evocation of a popular uprising, the *Straße der Pariser Kommune* marked the centenary of the rebellious Paris Commune.

More broadly speaking, however, the above types of internationalist street names were outnumbered by nationally inward-looking appellations. One facet of the practiced onymic pedagogy was the domesticization of the Stalinist personality cult model, as late or veteran SED leaders themselves also began to be rewarded, especially in high-profile inner-city locations, with their “own” streets. In one example of the party’s self-aggrandizement in this fashion, the GDR’s first president Wilhelm Pieck (1876–1960) was elevated onto the street signage of Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg in 1951, on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

Alongside medal names in the “classic” Stalinist cult model (see Murray 2000, 17), there existed numerous other nuances in the “German road to socialism,” a doctrine inaugurated by the KPD leader Anton Ackermann in the mid-1940s (Azaryahu 1986, 584–5). As the years passed, this policy developed into a veritable reverse image of “an abrupt post-Second World War suppression of nationalism and ethnic regionalism” (cf. Ashworth and Tunbridge 1999, 105–6; Czepczyński 2008, 4). To use the words of Benedict Anderson (1991, 2), the GDR was grounded “in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-revolutionary past.” One emphasis in the domestic rooting of communism was to co-opt the towering figures of Marx and Engels, the founders of communist theory, both of German origin. Equally significant for the indigenization of the new socialist rule were more lately bygone intellectual-political figures, who were still part of the living collective memory of older-generation East Germans, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, whom Pieck extolled in 1950 as the “true defenders of the national interests of the German people” (cited in Weitz 2001, 61). By the same token, the regal *Doretheenstraße* made way for a street carrying a name of Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), an early figurehead of the women’s movement in Germany and beyond, who united socialism and feminism. Continuity-seeking and spirit-enhancing pedagogic thrusts both worked in tandem behind the profusion of such names:

The most difficult hurdle facing the KPD and SED was how to project this counter-memory onto the wider German population in a way that might cultivate a new sense of historical consciousness. Thus, the KPD/SED set out to educate the masses about these events and propagate a specific politicized interpretation in an attempt to gain loyalty and win over supporters for their cause. (Olsen 2015, 21)

The GDR’s endeavors to underline its organic links with the communist hero martyrs and the German workers’ historical struggles evidently mirrored a prominent reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled in the state-controlled politics of memory, and in street naming discourses in particular. Intriguingly, at no stage were East Berlin’s street signs reserved only for the highest-ranking SED dignitaries (Azaryahu 1986; 1991).

Evoking Folk Heroes and Intra-National Bonds

Broadening the historical scope of the state narrative was quintessential for the interlinked goals of indigenization and legitimatization of the communist ideology in East Germany

(Sänger 2006; Olsen 2015). Indeed, many honorific street names in East Berlin would perhaps be better described as “encyclopedia-drawn” commemorations of distinguished Germans from various vocational fields. For whatever particular reasons,² from the advent of the GDR until its eventual demise, name-givers occasionally chose names such as *Steinbachstraße* (after the architect Erwin von Steinbach, c. 1244–1318), *Dörpfeldstraße* (after the archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld, 1853–1940), *Nipkowstraße* (after the inventor Paul Gottlieb Nipkow, 1860–1940), *Max-Herman-Straße* (after a twentieth-century drama scholar), or *Lea-Grundig-Straße* (after a twentieth-century designer). The honoring of artists and creative practitioners was especially favored, with exaltations of non-communist modernists such as *Corinthstraße*, after the painter Lovis Corinth, and *Alfred-Döblin-Straße* after the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). Older generations of German artists were similarly commemorated, provided that their oeuvres entailed traces of anti-militarism, or even better, sympathy for the poor. As if to guarantee a broad “organic” representation of the national past in the street nomenclature, East Berlin’s city-text exploited evocations of figures that were part of the living memory of East Berliners as well as name paragons of older origin.

Most commonly by far, however, this expedient historical repository for enhancement of national spirit was tailored by commemorating rebellions of the lower classes at various moments in German history. Almost as a plea for ordinary citizens to acknowledge the GDR’s status as the legitimate heir of a long national trajectory of struggles against feudal, capitalist, and Fascist oppressors, there was a strong tendency to honor courageous revolutionaries, resisters, and victims of oppression. In this vein, Käthe Niederkirchner, a female resistance fighter tortured and murdered by the Nazis, was doubly commemorated, first in Mitte in 1951, then in Prenzlauer Berg in 1974 (De Soto 1995, 38). A homage to Joseph Moll, one of the first acknowledged urban revolutionary proletarians active in the mid-nineteenth century tumults across Central Europe, contributed to the co-presence of multiple temporalities in Mitte’s “egalitarian” neotoponymy (De Soto 1995). The revolutionary actions of radicalized folk heroes and trade-unionists in 1848 were one source of inspiration, as was the German Peasants’ War of the mid-1520s. Even if the quantitative emphasis in (re)naming practices was on more readily recalled anti-Fascist struggles, different episodes in “the people’s history” were utilized as odonymic raw material to underscore the GDR’s self-image as the culmination of the German people’s “national emancipation” (Mevius 2013, 3).

The overt and covert forms of namescape propaganda were not restricted only to high-profile historical areas. In extreme cases, as with the “new town” Fennpfuhl, in the Lichtenberg district, nearly all coinages (18 out of 20) conjured up somewhat lesser-known communist anti-Nazi freedom fighters in the style of *Ernst-Reinke-Straße*, *Paul-Junius-Straße*, and *Judith-Auer-Straße* (Sandvoß 1998). In most suburbs, the re-forging of pre-existing street toponymy took place in a more modest and diversified manner. In Adlershof, in the Treptow district, 18 street name alterations (one sixth of all local streets) were carried out between 1948 and 1984, two thirds of these in 1951 in line with the East Berlin Magistrate’s stipulation that “monarchical,” “military,” and “Fascist” names were to be axed. At this point, *Argonnenweg* (after a First-World-War battlefield in France), *Metzestraße* (a reference to the French city of Metz, annexed to Germany in 1871–1918), and *Bismarckstraße* (one of several evocations of the “Iron Chancellor” across the districts of Berlin) vanished and were replaced by evocations of meritorious workers, professionals, and resistance fighters from different historical eras (e.g., *Florian-Geyer-Straße*, after a knight who led a rebellious peasant army in the German Peasants’ War). As for commemorations of deserving citizens who had ended up living in the neighborhood, streets were dedicated to Peter Kast (a metal worker, editor of the KPD party organ *Die Rote Fahne*, and a Spanish

Civil War veteran, 1894–1959) and Anna Seghers (a pacifist novelist and the founder of an anti-Fascist Heinrich-Heine-Klub for German exiles in Mexico, 1900–1983).

Overall, the balance in naming practices in East German cities moved from the representation of power towards a motivation through *Heimat*-based education (Sänger 2006). This shift can be seen in suburbs built later in the GDR period, which were equipped with seemingly more “apolitical” street names in comparison to the East Berlin norm. Cases in point are Marzahn and Hellersdorf, two adjacent high-rise estates on the city’s eastern outskirts urbanized in the 1970s and 1980s. Out of a handful of KPD or SED politicians honored in them, there are *Karl-Marx-Straße*, *Martha-Arendsee-Straße*, and *Waldemar-Schmidt-Straße*. Even so, protagonists of resistance movements figured more abundantly in the street signage of the suburbs, such as *Stephan-Born-Straße*, paying homage to a working people’s spokesperson in the 1848 uprisings. However, even these archetypal GDR-era “rebel names” were dwarfed by a thematic naming convention inherited from the area’s pre-urban and pre-socialist past, with references to “ordinary” towns, municipalities, neighborhoods, and even mountains in the surrounding Brandenburg region and elsewhere in the East German territory dominating the naming of the mega-suburbs, as if reflecting the socialist nation in microcosm. Whereas the Nazi era had seen a westward expansion of local street name references to the Rhineland-Palatinate, the place identities of Marzahn and Hellersdorf were now developed in a more limited territorial sense, with genuine domestic underpinnings. A very conventional tool of homeland-making—the symbolic socialization of an urban population towards “spatial identification with the territorial state as home” (Kaiser 2009; see also Paasi 1996)—was thus employed here for odonymic-pedagogic purposes.

Un-Renamed Streets and Other Ambiguities

The above vignettes testify that the political system of the GDR and its local cultural intermediaries across East Berlin (potentially organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense) did not only issue “medal names” in the strict Stalinist pattern. Much more commonly, name-givers harkened back to earlier periods and civic uprisings in the national past. Although posterity has often portrayed the socialist era as a demise of nationalism, this view rang true in the namescape of East Berlin only in a narrow sense. The city’s political-odonymic identity was diffused and ambiguous, notwithstanding occasional large-scale renaming waves (Azaryahu 1986, 601). Socialist name-givers also left a range of conventional naming models and national symbols intact (see similar observations from other contexts: Foote et al. 2000; Saparov 2003). Even in the historical inner-city areas, Prussian dynastic commemorations such as *Friedrichstraße* persisted in the streetscape throughout the existence of the GDR. Given that the GDR had proclaimed itself “the legitimate heir of everything which is progressive in history” (Schmidt 1978; cited in Azaryahu 1997, 483), why were these and other ideologically non-representative street names tolerated in the East German capital?

We are inclined to give a “Gramscian” answer: one key undercurrent in East Berlin’s odonymic script mirrored a will to guarantee popular consent for the threatened regime at stake. Essentially, a Soviet-style indigenization policy (Murray 2000; Saparov 2003) was abundantly applied in the first communist state on German soil (Mevius 2013). For another “external” factor behind the prominence of a consent-seeking stance in street naming practices, the dual-state city of Berlin was the epicenter of Cold War propaganda (Colomb 2012). GDR rulers sought to show citizens the state’s independence from Moscow through an array of recognizably German historical and cultural symbols (Olsen 2015). Both the Federal Republic and the GDR sought for historical continuity based on national heritage, while making a break with its Nazi-tarnished, undemocratic variations. Just as “West Germany laid claim to the democratic traditions of 1848 and the Weimar Republic” (Olsen 2015, 10), East

German politics of memory relied on Marxist interpretations of these and other episodes in the national past.

Compared to its Eastern European allies, the GDR faced an extra challenge to the legitimacy of communist rule, due to the close geographical proximity of the economically-prosperous West (Colomb 2012, 50–70). In East Berlin, in particular, people's perceptions of their fellow (West) Berliners, with more economic and individual liberties, were a constant dimension of everyday life. Both explicit and implicit traces of the ideological struggle between the rival political systems emerged in the street toponymy on both sides of the new intra-urban state boundary, indicating that a veritable “toponymic Cold War” was at stake. A poignant example in West Berlin was the renaming in 1953 of the prestigious *Charlottenburger Chaussee* as *Straße des 17. Juni*, a reminder of the brutal crushing of the construction workers' uprising by Soviet tanks on *Stalinallee* in that same year. After the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1960, the GDR authorities sought to win round the East Berliners by renaming three streets in memory of police officers who had died on duty when guarding the “anti-Fascist protection fence” (Marjomäki 1993, 87). It may also be that a comparatively high presence of female freedom fighters in East Berlin's street signage—especially since the 1970s—was partly motivated by the propagandist competition with the West.

All in all, evocations of recent and time-honored struggles between the powerful and the suppressed played a pivotal role in the party-state's attempted construction of legitimacy. Remarkably, from the standpoint of Gramscian hegemony theory, street names drawn from heroes and martyrs of liberation struggles (proletarian or otherwise), more or less “bi-directionally” bestowed with an eye to popular sensibilities, were the archetype of GDR-era street naming. Nevertheless, the believability of the GDR counter-narrative gradually weakened as the state-socialist experiment proved incapable of redeeming its emancipatory and economic promises in the eyes of increasingly disillusioned East Germans. Symptomatic of Berliners' talent for dark humor even under forced consensus, the monumental *Karl-Marx-Allee* (in 1949–1961 *Stalinallee*) was nicknamed *Stalins Badezimmer* (“Stalin's Bathroom”) in the late-GDR (“Das längste Baudenkmal Europas” 2011). More crucially for the subsequent march of events, the GDR name paragon Rosa Luxemburg's rebellious dictum, namely that “freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently,” was brought into sharp relief as the unifying slogan of the opposition movement that conquered public spaces with increasing frequency in East Berlin and other East German cities in 1988–1989 (Philipsen 1993; Saunders 2011, 38, 42).

The Afterlife of Socialist Street Names in Post-Socialist (East) Berlin

In the terminology of Henri Lefebvre (1991, 54), the GDR regime managed to alter “ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses”—and consequently a substantial portion of Berlin's former street toponymy. Even so, the state-socialist system remained a silently questioned “minimal” hegemony for very many East Berliners throughout its existence, or at least degenerated into a “decadent” hegemony over the decades. Eventually, latent popular discontent towards the regime culminated in the *Wende* of 1989–1990. Seen through a Gramscian lens, at stake was an extreme, revolutionary expression of a reciprocal power relationship in which the ruled ultimately overthrew their rulers. Henceforth, the reciprocity of power relations in the capital of unified Germany has pluralized into an ideologically-polyvalent field between multiple political parties, the federal-, metropolitan- and district-level tiers of governance, and different groups of Berliners. In this section, we will consider the more recent fate of different GDR-era street

naming discourses—from Stalinist cult names and odonymic internationalism to street names resonant of the indigenization of socialism—in post-socialist East Berlin.

The Initial Wave of Eradication and Local Protests

A considerable number of socialist-era street names were axed within a few years of Berlin's (re)unification. In the mid-1990s, it even seemed that "the last residues of the GDR past" might be soon effaced from street signs in the historical center of Berlin (Azaryahu 1997, 492). By 1993, however, the volume of de- and re-commemorations had remained deplorably moderate in the eyes of many right-wing advocates of a new "purified" Germany (Eick 2013, 37). A key reason behind the slow pace of change was that the former East Berlin districts were in charge of making the odonymic transition. In the two years that followed the election of district assemblies in December 1990, only 60 streets were renamed (Azaryahu 1997, 484–7). In this phase, it was mainly glorifications of functionaries and collaborators of the socialist state that were expunged. For instance, *Otto-Nuschke-Straße* was purged (regaining its pre-socialist name *Jägerstraße*), the Red Army-associated *Bersarinstraße* became *Petersburger Straße* (a re-adopted reverence to the newly renamed Saint Petersburg), *Karl-Maron-Straße* became *Poelchaustraße* (a post-socialist commemoration of an anti-Nazi freedom fighter and socialist prison chaplain), *Peter-Kast-Straße* became *Radickestraße* (after a nineteenth-century spirits manufacturer), and the street names dedicated to killed GDR border guards were also changed (Ladd 1997, 212). The eight districts of East Berlin were largely inclined to ideological compromises, mainly limiting themselves to replacing SED-aggrandizing or otherwise explicit tokens of the GDR regime itself, and the district authorities "were careful not to de-commemorate the mainly communist martyrs of anti-Nazi resistance movements who were prominent heroes of the anti-fascist mythology of the GDR" (Azaryahu 1997, 487).

However, the Berlin Senate, run by the Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, CDU), was dissatisfied with the pace of renaming. On the one hand, right-wing hard-liners drew parallels between the GDR and the Third Reich as two successive dictatorships, holding that the whole anti-democratic inheritance of the GDR was to be anathematized (De Soto 1996, 44–5). On the other hand, the district mayors and councils with an electoral mandate generally believed that decisions on the replacement of street names should be "discussed with the citizens of each district" (Flierl 1991; quoted in De Soto 1996, 34). In 1993, the Senate nominated an Independent Commission for Street Name Changes, tasked with seeking compromise and arriving at scholarly and prudent renaming proposals, rather than merely politically motivated ones (Azaryahu 1997; Ladd 1997). Once the Commission's list of recommendations was made public in 1994, neither the anti-communist conservatives nor the leftists complied (De Soto 1996). Tensions between the Senate and the lower tier of government were further exacerbated after the 1995 district elections, when the negative repercussions of privatization, high unemployment, and escalating living costs in the eastern jurisdictions resulted in growing support for the Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, PDS), the SED's successor party (Azaryahu 1997, 490). It was at this point that the CDU's Herwig Haase, the sitting Senator of Traffic and Public Works, resorted to the Capital Contract of 1993 to enforce renaming a number of street in the old inner-city neighborhoods. During this "anti-communist street name offensive," Haase overruled the democratically chosen district councils' will and altered the Independent Commission's renaming suggestions in several cases (De Soto 1996, 43; Ladd 1997, 212–4). In an essentially coerced way, he decreed the changes such as reverting the "socialist-feminist" *Clara-Zetkin-Straße* to *Dorotheenstraße*, changing *Artur-Becker-Straße* to *Kniprodestraße* (returning from a martyr of the Spanish

Civil War to a fourteenth-century Teutonic knight), and *Dimitroffstraße* to *Danzigerstraße* (a re-adopted reference to a formerly Prussian town now in Polish territory), despite outbursts of dissatisfaction in the media and on the streets. Haase also intended to abolish *Bersarinplatz*, yet the CDU Mayor Eberhard Diepgen vetoed this particular change in the face of opposition from the Russian Embassy and angry Berliners (Ladd 1997).

Azaryahu (1997, 490–1) largely dismisses the local protests as “a ritual of resistance” by PDS district politicians, if not a case in which dissonant voices were “artificially multiplied” by local newspapers such as the *Berliner Zeitung*, in a way described by Gramsci as typical for generating popular consent in the exercise of hegemony (Gramsci 2007, 1638). Other researchers have placed more emphasis on the protests as a genuine civic matter (De Soto 1996; Ladd 1997; Huyssen 2003; Lisiak 2010). In any case, a multi-front opposition emerged in the face of the conservative hard-liners’ coercive renaming campaign, as the policy would not only have rendered the whole symbolic inheritance of GDR-era socialism and its hero(in)es as “non-presentable” in the official collective memory; to rephrase Huyssen (2003, 54), the strict anti-communist policy would also have marginalized a whole range of domains of experience among “an East German population that felt increasingly deprived of its life history and of its memories of four decades of separate development.” Seen from this perspective, there was an intriguing mismatch between what historians of memory politics have conceptualized as *national collective memory* versus *mass personal memory* (Snyder 2002).

De Soto’s (1996) account of the afterlife of East Berlin’s socialist street names further illuminates civic and feminist aspects of the controversy over the CDU-led street naming purification policy. Through her implicitly Gramscian framework, De Soto underscores the embeddedness of post-socialist street naming practices in a wider “politics of culture,” including, alongside the institutional political sphere, “processes of conflict and manoeuvring that go on ... internal to communities” (Verdery 1991, 12; cited in De Soto 1996, 30). One example was the street named after Clara Zetkin, in which case the emotional intensity of popular resistance against a single renaming proposal escalated to proportions rarely witnessed in European urban history. A group of women from East and West Berlin founded an Independent Women’s Commission for Street Names to oppose the projected rescinding of *Clara-Zetkin-Straße* and the overall under-representation of women in Berlin’s toponymy with at that time only 130 out of the approximately 10,000 streets in Berlin named after women (De Soto 1996, 42). Even though the battle over *Clara-Zetkin-Straße* was lost by Haase’s decision in November 1995, the commemoration of distinguished women has increased considerably, not least in the former East Berlin (Hoback 2007), as part of a salient civil society-influenced turn in the design of post-socialist street nomenclature. In light of the tendency to try to rectify gender inequalities in the male-dominated toponymic pantheon, it is also symptomatic that even Clara Zetkin herself made a swift return to Berlin’s namescape around the turn of the millennium, when a park and adjacent road were named after her in Hellersdorf.

“Ostalgie” Traces in the Pluralized Namescape

A close look at the city map reveals that most GDR-era street names have survived unchanged, notwithstanding the eradication of several communist “medal names” in the 1990s (Sänger 2006, 10). It can be confidently argued that the overwhelming bulk of these surviving names belong to the “popular” rather than “elite” side of the preceding regime’s toponymic pantheon. Most East Berliners have silently accepted the presence of socialist symbols in the streetscape (Schulz zur Wiesch 2007; see also Colomb 2012, 279). Consequently, many of the city’s contemporary street names may strike an average Western

visitor as “out of place” (Olsen 2015, 1), as “ideological leftovers” (cf. Czepczyński 2008; Light and Young 2014), or as perplexing mnemonic curiosities. The most blatant cases in this regard are the commemorations of Marx, Engels, Bebel, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and Thälmann (even though some public references to these figures have been removed) in the touristic inner-city areas of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain. As a whole, however, the former East Berlin embraces many other toponymic vestiges less often highlighted by city guidebooks as socialist relics. Names commemorating artists and writers with sympathies for the poor, such as *Heinrich-Heine-Platz*, *Käthe-Kollwitz-Straße*, *Majakowskiring*, *Anna-Seghers-Straße*, and *Alfred-Döblin-Straße*, have stood the test of time with hardly any casualties. A chapter of its own is the resilience of names drawn from insurgent folk heroes and anti-Nazi martyrs, once the toponymic archetype of the indigenization of socialism in the GDR. Imparting “ostalgic” overtones to almost every single neighborhood of contemporary East Berlin, the folk heroes of socialism have only rarely been purged from the post-socialist toponymy. Likewise, in very many ex-GDR suburbs the pervasiveness of rebel and martyr names is clear for anyone with a decent encyclopedic source to hand. In Friedrichshain, especially, various top-down efforts to gentrify and westernize the city’s image into a “colourless and tasteless cosmopolis” (cf. Gramsci 1982, 184) have also more generally nurtured oppositional stances towards further de-commemoration of the socialist past (Huysen 2003; Colomb 2012). Other naming instances elude easy categorization along the dichotomy of communism versus anti-communism, such as *Silvio-Meier-Straße*, commemorating a squatter of the late-GDR period who was the victim of a neo-Nazi stabbing in 1992 (Merrill 2015).

Hence, in lieu of the early-1990s zeal “to defeat Communism anew every day” (Ladd 1997, 214), and to the continuing astonishment of external right-wing observers (e.g., *Unzensuriert.at*, 2012; Wielński 2012), the preservation of remaining GDR street names seems to be broadly accepted, even by many of those locals who have no nostalgia for the GDR as such (see also Schulz zur Wiesch 2007; Colomb 2012). In Gramscian terms, it appears that the surviving socialist discourses in the street toponymy have been increasingly re-interpreted as vestiges from an “organically representative” phase in the history of the city and its inhabitants, along with multiple other pasts that contemporarily figure in the memoryscape of Berlin.

Conclusion

The overarching aim of this chapter’s explorations of East Berlin has been to use Gramsci’s specific and relatively unknown writings about street naming, together with his more general writings on hegemony, to make sense of the tendencies and ambiguities of socialist and post-socialist street naming. As such, this study has brought into sharp relief a number of populist and resilient aspects of toponymy. In the socialist period, an ideological-pedagogic perennial in street naming was to equate communist rule with the rule of the people, in an attempt to fuel popular belief in the GDR as the culmination of national emancipation and the German road to socialism. Most archetypically, this took place through the evocation of mainly communist anti-Nazi martyrs as well as insurgent folk heroes from different historical eras, and much less frequently through the toponymic self-aggrandizement of the SED and its leaders. Despite the lip-service paid to egalitarianism and popular empowerment through street toponymy and other cultural media, the believability of this rhetorical counter-narrative weakened towards the regime’s final demise. As for the post-socialist period, we noted the initial escalation of tensions over the meanings of “democracy” in street naming matters between the metropolitan government (then led by right-wing politicians who saw the entire communist legacy as antithetical to democracy) and East Berlin districts (in which democracy

was cherished as autonomous local decision-making). Beyond this dichotomy are civic and authority initiatives to fight the under-representation of female figures in the city's honorific landscape, as well as a somewhat unexpected mutation of GDR-era and GDR-style "rebel" street names into symbols for post-socialist identity discourses among disillusioned East Berliners. As a kind of Gramscian reverse image of a top-down repudiation of the entire socialist past, attitudes towards which historical eras, ideological worldviews, and vernacular symbols are entitled to be publicly commemorated have been considerably pluralized in (East) Berlin.

In distilling more general lessons based on our findings, we must acknowledge the specificity of (East) Berlin both as a socialist and post-socialist city. Local idiosyncrasies such as those related to the proximity of the West during the socialist period, Berlin's reputation as a city whose population is "more politically invested in the vexed issues of city space and planning than elsewhere" (McRobbie 2013, 995), and not the least the relative autonomy of its boroughs in street naming matters (Gill 2006), are likely to have produced street naming practices in the city that are pronouncedly more "reciprocal" in nature than in, for example, an average East-Central European city. Nonetheless, East Berlin has definitely not been the only urban landscape in which ideological continuities, populist rather than elitist overtones, and other ambiguities have been at least fleetingly observed by street naming scholars (see findings parallel to this study: e.g., Azaryahu 1986; Gill 2005; Therborn 2006; Bodnar 2009; Šakaja and Stanić 2011; Stiperski et al. 2011; Marin 2012; Light and Young 2014).

As a noteworthy commonality between the fundamentally different political and societal circumstances under scrutiny, distinctive attempts to ground naming practices in existing socio-cultural forms and popular mindsets—and hence seek a balance between coercion and consent—surfaced again and again in our material. In both periods analyzed, a whole "encyclopedic" array of commemorations of vocations other than politicians emerged, albeit with varying emphases, with "organic" local and national traditions as well as folk heroes from different historical periods gaining increasing salience in street signage. Conversely, the tempo of overtly elitist honorific naming decelerated as the political systems matured. Neither the socialist nor post-socialist name-givers entirely revoked the street toponymy inherited from previous regimes. Seen from a Gramscian angle, this all indicates that legitimacy-seeking and persuasive attitudes towards civil society have tacitly guided street naming practices from the immediate post-war context up to the post-socialist present.

This chapter's investigations point towards the importance of acknowledging the complexity of toponymic power relations by looking beyond the oversimplifying dichotomy that often steers scholars to assume that top-down (official) and bottom-up (popular) naming are somehow totally separate processes or phenomena. In addition to more general prospects that Gramsci's thinking can open up for theorizations of toponymic power, we contend that two Gramscian notions in particular—those of organicity and reciprocity—ought to play more pronounced roles in the understanding of the power of street names. Very significantly, the notion of the organicity of a political culture (or lack thereof) directs analytical attention to socio-cultural inequalities of power in terms of the presence or absence of diverse forms of the popular in the toponymic city-text. Given that Gramsci (1982 [1917]) himself called for more sensitive, considered, and authentic street naming, we believe it is instructive for any contemporary toponymic analysis to reflect upon the representation of different social (especially subaltern) groups in the toponymic canon, and indeed in any realm of naming or related language practices. En route, critical questions as to which segments of the local population and which social histories are symbolically privileged and marginalized enter the research design as a matter of course. In this way, a Gramscian approach to organicity can sensitize research with a nuanced understanding of multiple temporalities at play in naming

practices, as the analytical-historical interest no longer concerns only elite interpretations of the national past (national collective memory), but also pasts lived and remembered by various groups of “ordinary” people (mass personal memory). In our study of Berlin, the methodological focus on organicity highlighted gender imbalances and associated political intricacies—a power issue rarely addressed rigorously in politicized street naming research until recently (yet see exceptions: e.g., De Soto 1995; Dwyer 2000; Rose-Redwood 2008; Niculescu-Mizil 2014).

We believe that a Gramscian approach underlines the importance and relevance of critical place name scholarship, while fulfilling the aim set out by Gramsci himself to “inculcate the habit of assessing the forces of agency in society with greater caution and precision” (Gramsci 2007, 333; translation in Gramsci 1996, 53). While “official” street naming is by definition a prerogative of nominated authorities (cf. Azaryahu 1997, 481), our Gramscian-inspired explorations have accentuated how naming practices simultaneously mirror often covert cultural strategies to win popular consent for the prevailing political order. We would even go so far as to argue that entirely neglecting this aspect of toponymic power borders on a view that people are mere pawns in the conceptions of power apparatuses “out there.” Even elitist projections of ideological worldviews hardly ever develop in a socio-cultural vacuum. This is exactly why there is an urgent need for culturally-enriched (Gramscian-inspired or otherwise) understandings of street naming in a variety of political and societal settings, together with similar studies examining other kinds of naming or related language practices. Neither rulers nor street name scholars should ignore the impact of civil society, or take for granted people’s reactions to the hegemonic operations of power over language and space.

Notes

1. *Stalinallee* was again renamed *Karl-Marx-Allee* during the subsequent de-Stalinization process in 1961.
2. Street name encyclopedias on German cities typically provide scarce information on the grounds on which “politically neutral” street names were given (Sänger 2011, personal communication).

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